



Service-learning pedagogy, civic engagement, and academic engagement: Multiple bi-directional relationships in college freshman

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Summary

This study draws on Bandura's idea of reciprocal determinism (1978) to demonstrate the interrelationships between environment (service learning) and student engagement attitudes and behaviors. A quasi-experimental design with data collected at two points in time was employed in which data were collected from 300 participants drawn from 379 freshmen participating in learning communities in their first semester of college.

The first hypothesis predicted the main effects of high school civic engagement levels on first year college students enrolled in a service-learning course. The results supported this hypothesis in the sense that students with prior community engagement experience were more likely to take a service-learning course. The second hypothesis predicted the main effects of high school academic engagement levels on first year college students enrolled in a service-learning course. The results did not support this hypothesis in the sense that there was no relationship between prior academic engagement and the likelihood of taking a service-learning course.

The third hypothesis predicted main effects of participation in a service-learning course on civic engagement levels for first year college students. The results demonstrated partial support for this hypothesis, meaning that students in the service-learning course were more civically engaged in their behaviors but not more civically engaged with their attitudes.

The fourth hypothesis predicted the main effects of participation in a service-learning course on academic engagement levels for college freshman. The results indicated that first year college students in a service-learning course were not more likely to have higher academic engagement attitudes or behaviors than freshmen in the comparison group - demonstrating no support for this hypothesis.

The fifth and sixth hypotheses were structured within the first year college students service-learning course and predicted the main effects of academic and civic behavioral engagement on academic and civic attitudinal engagement, respectively. The results demonstrated support for the fifth hypothesis that academic behavioral engagement within a service-learning course leads to greater change in both academic and civic attitudinal engagement at the end of the course and partial support for the sixth hypothesis that civic behavioral engagement within a service-learning course leads to greater change in civic but not academic attitudinal engagement at the end of the course.

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